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ABSTRACT

Studies of "calculated-risk" students at Harcum Junior College conflict with reports conducted elsewhere. The first report concluded that a small percentage of calculated-risk students persist through their freshman year. A more recent study (Harcum Junior College) found that 87 per cent of the students observed were making satisfactory progress toward graduation. Still a third (the most recent) study found that a substantial number of academic-risk students persist through graduation at Harcum Junior College. On the findings of the two Harcum studies, it was concluded that selected admission of calculated-risk students should continue in future admissions to Harcum. (Author/RC)

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HARCUM JUNIOR COLLEGE
BRYN MAWR, PENNA. 19010

Office of Research
IRR 70-36

"Success" of "Calculated Risk" Students at Harcum Junior College

1. In Institutional Research Report, IRR 69-4 (Blai, 1969) and IRR 70-33 (Blai, 1970) the effectiveness of an on-trial (or provisional status) program was reviewed and analyzed for a group of 46 freshman students. It was found that the group earned an average cumulative quality-point average of 1.8 (on a scale of A = 4, B = 3, C = 2 & D = 1) for their first semester and a final quality-point average of 2.1, or a +.3 increase over the two-year period. As was noted in IRR 69-4, "there is some evidence (Gelso, 1965, 1966 & Hills 1965) to indicate that only a small percentage of students who are admitted to college on a trial or provisional basis actually persist through their freshman year. On the other hand, there is a study (Blai, 1969) which found 87% of a group of 46 provisional students persisted through their freshman year. Evidently there are some academically marginal students who do achieve at a satisfactory level of performance leading toward the earning of an appropriate-level degree. (1)

2. The persistence in attendance for this group of 46 "risk" students is reflected in the following statistics drawn from the Harcum registrar's Academic Year 1969-70 Report (Abelle, 1970).

Provisional Student	FACT	Non-provisional Student
42%	1. Graduated 1970	63%
15%	2. Completed 2-years & plan to complete requirements for graduation: Summer or Fall, 1970	1%
57%	3. Graduated or expect to graduate	64%
22%	4. Dropped out after one semester	8%
10%	5. Dropped out after one year	19%
32%	6. Drop-outs	27%
6%	7. Dismissed for academic reasons	3%
38%	8. Total Separations	30%
5%	9. Completed 2 years but failed to complete graduation requirements	6%
100%	10. Total of 3, 8 & 9 above	100%

(1) Blai, 1969: p. 1.

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3. As the comparisons in paragraph 2 above reveal:

(1) Approximately 4 out of 10 of the provisionsl students graduated May 1970 in contrast to approximately 6 out of 10 non-provisionals.

(2) Those provisionals extending their schooling to complete graduation after more than 2 years, if added to (1) above, close the gap between the two groups so that approximately 6 out of 10 in each group will graduate.

(3) The dropouts combined with dismissals reveal only an 8% increase for provisionals when compared to non-provisionals and those failing to complete graduation requirements are virtually the same for both groups.

4. Based upon the findings in the 1969 study, (Blai, 1969), it was tentatively concluded that the group level of academic achievement was sufficiently high to warrant the continued, careful selection of so-called "marginal" students into future Harcum freshmen classes.

5. In September 1969 some 124 students or 32% of that freshman class, matriculated at Harcum. As the following tabulation reveals the dropout and dismissal rates for this group were substantially less than for the Septembe 1968 group of 46.

1968	FACT	1969
22%	1. Drop-outs after one semester	9%
6%	2. Dismissed for academic reasons	2.3%

6. Based upon the findings in the 1970 study (Blai, 1970) in which it was noted that a substantial number of September 1968 academic-risk students did persist to achieve graduation from Harcum, it was concluded that selective admission o f such "calculated-risk" students should continue to be reflected in future admissions to Harcum.

7. The first year "progress" of the September 1969 freshman group of 124 provisional students is reflected in the following comparison with non-provisional September freshmen.

Provisionals - 1969	FACT	Non-provisionals - 1969
9%	1. Dropped out after one semester	14%
15%	2. Did not pre-register for 2nd yr.	16%
2.3%	3. Dismissed for academic reasons	2%
1.5%	4. Invited to return with freshman status	2%
72.2%	5. Pre-registered for 2nd year	66%
100%	6. Total	100%

8. As the comparisons in paragraph 7 reveal, there were fewer drop-outs among provisionals, with the other elements of comparison (1 through 4) being about the same. As a consequence, pre-registration, expressed as a percentage of each group, is actually higher for the provisionals than for the non-provisionals. In addition, the cumulative grade-point average at the end of the first year for September 1969 provisional freshmen was 2.1. This represents a +.3 gain over the September provisional freshmen at the end of their first year.

9. In the 1970 study (Blai, 1970) it was noted that a follow-up study of the 20 May 1970 graduates would be conducted to ascertain how well they succeeded in gaining entrance to 4-year institutions or gaining employment, for those graduating in terminal programs of study. "Results" reported by 12 respondents to a questionnaire among the May 1970 graduates (or from among 60% of the 20 'provisionals who graduated'), reveals the following facts:

(1) Accepted in 4-year colleges/universities = 6 or 50% of the respondents.
2 to Univ. of Miami
1 to Fairleigh-Dickenson Univ.
1 to Temple Univ.
1 to Jefferson Medical College
1 to Penna. State Univ.

(2) Accepted for employment = 6 or 50% of the respondents
2 - Secretary (Exec. Secretary majors)
1 - Assistant Teacher (Early Childhood Ed. major)
1 - Nursery School Teacher (" " ")
1 - Executive Trainee (Retail Merchandising major)
1 - Assistant Buyer (" " ")

(3) Quite evidently, these provisional Harcum graduates have been "successful," both in their educational and vocational aspirations; once again suggesting that such academically marginal students can and do persist and achieve satisfactorily as do non-provisional Harcum students.

10. As Gelso and Rowell have noted: "Follow-up research on students who are admitted to college on a trial basis also indicates that the usual intellecual predictors of academic performance (e.g.: Scholastic Aptitude Test, high school averages) seldom effectively differentiate between on-trial students who persist through the freshman year in college and those who do not. This is so because the ranges of the intellective predictors of academic performance for on-trial students are usually severely restricted; on-trial students' scores are invariably low. Thus, the question arises as to how

on-trial students who persist through the freshman year in college actually differ from those who do not persist. .....Using Borow's College Inventory of Academic Adjustment (CIAA), it was found that the persisters scored significantly higher in curricular adjustment, maturity of goals and level of aspirations, personal efficiency, personal relations, and overall adjustment." (2)

11. In consideration of the factual data summarized in this study and further detailed in studies IRR 69-4 (Blai, 1969) and IRR 70-4 (Blai, 1970), it is concluded that substantial evidence exists to recommend the continued careful selection and matriculation of so-called "marginal" or academic-risk applicants for admission to Harcum. It is evident that such "calculated risks" can and do persist to Harcum graduation, and further, do succeed in gaining acceptance to 4-year institutions or, in the case of graduates from terminal programs, in locating acceptable employment.

12. These "results" further suggest that additional research must be undertaken to ascertain what factors, intellective or others, can reliably differentiate between college applicants who may be expected to 'succeed'; (i.e. graduate), and those who may be expected to fall by the wayside.

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(2) Gelso & Rowell; p. 478

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